1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5







APPRENTICE LAMAS

The four-year old son of Chudo.

Chimpet in lama's dress, with his hands joined in prayer; taken inside the monastery porch.

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[facing p. 200]

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5



756 are men; of these three were first of all Padem. Kurma is Padem only; he can diagnose but can only perform a few sacrifices and exorcisms.

The other two groups of possessed priests resemble one another and differ from Mun and Padem in so far as neither can make sacrifices nor perform exorcisms, but can merely get possessed by supernaturals; they dance until the supernatural speaks through them and discloses its wants and whereabouts. Both wear special [292] clothes for their performances: the Yaba (women are called Yama) wear bandoliers of tinkling bells and have their clothes fringed with bells; they hold a metal plate and beat it as they dance. Pau (women are called Nandjému) wear elaborate wool head-dresses and dance with a skull-drum in one hand and a bell in the other. Both Yaba and Pau are and have been very rare because the possessing spirits are not Lepcha but have been introduced through inter-marriage with foreign women, the Yaba spirit comes from Limbu women (the Limbu are a Nepali tribe) and the Pau from Sikkimese-Tibetans. There is a tradition that there is a similar spirit called Jhankri belonging to the Chetri,[2] but this spirit has never manifested itself among the Lepchas as there has been no inter-marriage between the two groups.

There is only one representative of this group in Lingthem: the 'elder grandmother' of Patek, an old woman over seventy, is a Nandjému. The service of these diviners is only called in when lama and Mun fail to agree on a diagnosis, or when there is reason to suppose that a new devil has taken up its abode in the neighbourhood. In such cases a Pau or Yaba, usually from another village, will be called in to discover its home and its needs.

754 It is believed that there are two sorts of Mun, a good group
756 called Tang-li Mun and a bad group called Mun-mook Mun; the difference is similar to the traditional difference between white and black magicians. 'Mun-mook Mun are like thieves: they think and do evil and are possessed by devils which they employ for their own selfish ends; they alone can send devils (the term used for sorcery).' They are believed to have an influence like the evil

Pumri (wife of the second Dorjé Lapoon), the elder wife of Lumba *chithembu* (she is the daughter of Pumri and has the paternal spirit) the 'younger grandmother' of Patek, and the sister of Jiroong (the wife of Kaji). All four women practise.

[2] This Lepcha tradition is incorrect: the Chetri are a fairly pure Hindu tribe; the Jhankri occur among the Gurung.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5



the characteristics of which no escape is possible. The "head sign" denotes that a child should become a Lama and when this is found the boy is always sent to a teacher. He may later decide that he does not wish to practise and in this case will cease to study. There is no objection to children without the "head sign" becoming Lamas; but if, for instance, a boy born with the "hand sign" wishes to enter the Church nothing can prevent him from eventually turning into a thief. If a girl is born with the "heart sign" it means she should become a female Lama; and it may be noted in passing that in both sexes the "genital sign" is thought to be a sure indication of future sexual promiscuity. These so-called "signs" are not actually visible on the body; they are merely the attributes attaching to birth at a particular time, and failure to comply with the conditions indicated is thought to result in a shortening of life. I think, however, that Lepchas do not attach much importance to them, and in actual practice the son of a Lama, whatever his "sign," will nearly always study for at least a few years.

It is said that when a child reaches the age of three or four it will try on its own to study. I personally never saw any such infant prodigies; and such small boys in Lingtem as were destined for the Church seemed much more interested in catapulting birds or playing around in the fields. The only difference between them and other children was in the yellow sash worn round their waists, the distinguishing mark, apart from close-cropped hair, of Lepcha Lamas, who in Lingtem do not ordinarily wear monastic robes but dress as laymen. When the novice is about eight or nine his parents select some experienced Lama as his teacher, and to him they send the boy with a present. This usually takes the form of a pig's carcass and a few rupees. A father never teaches his own son, except incidentally, but the teacher will nearly always be some man of the boy's own village. The novice generally lives with his teacher and receives instruction only at night, since both must spend the daylight hours working in the fields. Sometimes a boy will run away from his

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5



793 matters. He is permitted to beat other Lamas, and also laymen who are slack in the performance of their duties, not excluding even the Dorje-Lopön, or head of the monastery. It may be noted, however, that he has no authority to beat people once they have left the monastery or its grounds.

The next rank is known as *Umzet*. This, too, necessitates a big feast, which is generally attended by the whole village and lasts from two to three days. An Umzet teaches but has no authority to beat people. He is really under-study to the head of the monastery, and is usually not advanced to this rank unless it is considered that he is capable eventually of succeeding his master.

*Dorje-Lopön* is the highest rank of all, and there is usually one at the head of every monastery, though in Lingtem there are two. In addition to the usual feast each Lama and every householder in the village presents a woven scarf to the Dorje-Lopön. He is not required to keep all these scarves and generally sells them again at half their usual price. Thus, people who do not bring one with them to the ceremony may buy one from the Dorje-Lopön himself and re-present it, so that the offering really turns into a kind of cash transaction. There is no limit to the number of each rank of Lama in any particular monastery, and in practice the senior Dorje-Lopön, should there be more than one, is the titular head, the actual power being usually in the hands of some more active member of the community, more often than not the Umzet, as was the case in Lingtem. For the performance of actual [242] ceremonies most of the Lamas wear the usual maroon robe as worn by Lamas in Tibet. Unlike that country, however, there are here no differences in dress by which a Lama's rank may be recognised.

In addition to the Lamas there are also in Lingtem a number of nuns, or *Inebu*, as they are called. In Tibet, while female Lamas are given a very inferior position, scarcely higher than lay devotees, they are required to practise chastity, and usually live an ascetic life in remote and lonely convents. There is one such place at Tatsang, on the road to

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5



Everest, which has been several times visited on the way to the mountain. The nuns were indescribably dirty, and their faces caked with soot. They were dressed in maroon, in robes similar to those worn by Lamas. Their heads were completely shaved; but to protect them against the cold, which was severe at nearly all times of the year, they wore huge yak's-hair wigs, shaped like the hats worn by Chinese mandarins, which gave them an almost grotesque appearance. The first time we visited the place, in 1922, the nuns turned out in force to inspect us, but they were far too shy to converse, even through our Tibetan interpreter, and contented themselves with a giggle. Most, if not all, of them were, so far as I remember, completely illiterate.

"Nuns are admitted to a few monasteries in Sikkim," notes Waddell, "but their number is extremely small, and individually they are illiterate." I doubt whether the Inebus of Lingtem could properly be classed as nuns at all. Most of them have had no real training and not one of them can read or write. They do not perform ceremonies for private individuals; nor are they given a place inside the main hall at monastic services, being regarded as scarcely different from ordinary women. Their devotions are confined almost entirely to the turning of prayer-wheels and drums, circumambulation of the monastery building, and telling their beads. The small Hla-gong, which houses the three big prayer-drums, is really their private chapel, and to this they have access at all times. They usually came to the monastery thrice each month, spent a few hours turning the drums, while they sang in unison, and then went away again. Whenever their visit coincided with some ceremony performed by the men we noticed that the attendance was markedly greater.

Most Inebus wear a rosary round their necks or carry it twined around the wrist. There is no other mark by which they may be recognised. I told one old woman that in Tibet I had noticed that nuns were always shaven, and asked her why the same custom was not adopted here, since the Lamas

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
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partners, who wear only one.* When in full dress, the woman's costume is extremely ornamental and picturesque; besides the shirt and petticoat she wears a small sleeveless woollen cloak, of gay pattern, usually covered with crosses, and fastened in front by a girdle of silver chains. Her neck is loaded with silver chains, amber necklaces, &c., and her head adorned with a coronet of scarlet cloth, studded with seed-pearls, jewels, glass beads, &c. The common dress is a long robe of indi, a cloth of coarse silk, spun from the cocoon of a large caterpillar that is found wild at the foot of the hills, and is also cultivated: it feeds on many different leaves, Sal (*Shorea*), castor-oil, &c.

In diet, they are gross feeders; † rice, however, forming their chief sustenance; it is grown without irrigation, and produces a large, flat, coarse grain, which becomes gelatinous, and often pink, when cooked. Pork is a staple dish: and they also eat elephant, and all kinds of animal food. When travelling, they live on whatever they can find, whether animal or vegetable. Fern-tops, roots of *Scitamineæ*, and their flower-buds, various leaves (it is difficult to say what not), and fungi, are chopped up, fried with a little oil, and eaten. Their cooking is coarse and dirty. Salt is costly, but prized; pawn (Betel pepper) is never eaten. Tobacco they are too poor to buy, and too indolent to grow and cure. Spices, oil, &c. are relished.

They drink out of little wooden cups, turned from knots of maple, or other woods; these are very curious on several accounts; they are very pretty, often polished, and mounted with silver. Some are supposed to be antidotes against

* Ermann (Travels in Siberia, ii. p. 204) mentions the Buraet women as wearing two tails, and fillets with jewels, and the men as having one queue only.

† Dr. Campbell's definition of the Lepcha's *Flora cibaria*, is, that he eats, or must have eaten, everything soft enough to chew; for, as he knows whatever is poisonous, he must have tried all; his knowledge being wholly empirical.